

# St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church



Baptism Preparation Booklet

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit...”

Matthew 28:19

Let us begin by offering you our heartfelt congratulations on the birth (or the coming birth) of your child! As parents you are filled with excitement...and exhaustion! This is a time of new beginnings for everyone. The Church rejoices with you in this most wonderful time!

As the priest and staff of Saint Teresa of Avila we are here for you and want to help you and guide you. This Baptism preparation booklet explains the basics of Baptism and how to prepare for it.

After reading this carefully, please do not hesitate to contact the parish office if you have any questions or other needs.

May God bless you and your family!

## **I. Your Catholic Faith**

A child is born in a dependent state – physically, emotionally, etc. He/she looks to you for every need. And you provide for your child in every way possible. But no matter how skilled a parent you are, there is one thing that you cannot give your child – eternal life.

St. John reminds us that Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life.” Therefore, your child’s soul cries out for God’s grace – to be healed of the effects of original sin and to be made holy.

***This is the Sacrament of Baptism!***

Your child is – and will become – the newest member of the spiritual family that Christ himself established...the Catholic Church. As a Catholic your child will experience the fullness of our 2000 year-old faith which is rooted in the very life of Christ himself.

Christ himself instituted all the Church's sacraments, and in Baptism we follow his command: "Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

In a particular way, your child will become a member of our parish family right here at Saint Teresa of Avila. It will be his/her spiritual home, as it is your spiritual home as members of our parish. We encourage you to contact us for all your spiritual needs, as we look to you to be an active participant in the life of the parish.

## **II. Infant Baptism In the Church's History**

The practice of infant Baptism has always existed in the Catholic Church. As we are told in the Letter of St. Peter, "Repent, and be baptized...For the promise is to you and to your children..." This promise toward the children of God is first rooted in the words of Christ, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." Therefore as the apostles went forth to baptize the nations they understood both children and adults must undergo this essential sacrament of initiation. The ancient Catholic historian Origen observed the continuation of this practice in 244 A.D. when he wrote, "...Baptism is given even to infants." This practice of infant baptism has continued unbroken down to this very day. Therefore, your child will be a part of a long and rich tradition of our faith.



### **III. Baptismal Commitment**

Though the sacrament of Baptism has a permanent spiritual effect on the soul of your child and is a powerful action of the Holy Spirit, it is not magic. It is like a seed in need of planting, and like any seed, the divine seed of Baptism will yield little without the equivalent of soil, water, and sunlight.



**Soil: Attending Mass as a family every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation and praying together as a family.**

**Water: Teaching the Catholic faith with your words.**

**Sunlight: Teaching the Catholic faith with your actions.**

Mom and Dad, Godfather and Godmother - commit yourselves today to providing these essential aspects of your child's spiritual development!

Children learn from what they see...both good and bad. Therefore, they depend on you to know how to live as faithful Catholics. And so Baptism asks you the question: **How well are you living your Catholic faith?**

## **IV. Your Faith**

If you have been a regularly practicing Catholic and an active participant in the life of our parish, we thank you and look forward to celebrating this sacrament with you.

If you are a new member of our parish just beginning your life here at Saint Teresa of Avila, we welcome you and eagerly look forward to getting to know you better as you become active members of our parish family.

If you and your spouse have drifted away from the practice of your Catholic faith and now look to actively live your faith anew, then we say “Welcome back!” The fact is that quite often little children can help us as adults to see things in a new way! As parents, the birth of your child causes you to consider again the importance of God and the Church, since you want to provide the best of foundations for your child.

Whatever your individual case may be, please know this: Saint Teresa of Avila is your spiritual family! You and your child can count yourselves as valued members of our community.



## **V. The Sacrament of Matrimony**

If you and your spouse did not get married in the Church, then this is a great opportunity for you!

Being married in the Church is not a prerequisite for having your child baptized. However, it is necessary to meet with a priest regarding this. The priest will listen and appreciate your individual situation, as we know everyone's situation is unique. Marriage, like Baptism, is a very serious matter. The priest can help you make the necessary steps to sacramentalize your marriage so that it can be recognized before both God and man.



## **VI. Choosing Godparents**

Choosing a Godparent can be both exciting and difficult! “Which uncle or aunt or cousin or brother or sister or friend should I choose?”

Being a Godparent is not simply an honorary title – it is a role of responsibility and commitment. So think ahead!!!

Your child needs a Godparent:

...who can attend his/her ***First Holy Communion*** and receive that Sacrament along with your child

...who can be eligible to be your child’s sponsor at ***Confirmation***

...who will be knowledgeable and capable of answering your child’s ***questions about the Catholic faith***

If your child could talk to you now and give you some advice, he/she would tell you this...

***“Mom and Dad, it’s possible that your closest friends and relatives are not practicing Catholics and therefore not the best support for my spiritual growth...no matter how special they are in your lives. Therefore, it may be hard to accept, but the disappointing reality is that they simply should not be my Godparents.”***

However, take heart in knowing that your choice of two practicing Catholics as Godparents will indicate to all your family and friends that

you take your child's Baptism seriously and are putting faith first when it comes to your child. This will inspire them! And your child will thank you later!

Each Godparent must obtain a "Letter of Good Standing" from the parish in which he/she is registered. This letter is signed by their pastor and indicates that they meet the prerequisites given in the **FAQ section** on the next page. The letter must be given to the parish office of Saint Teresa of Avila at least one month in advance of the Baptism.

You may be saying to yourself, "THERE'S TOO MANY RULES!"

Well that may be so, but please remember that these requirements serve not to impede your child's Baptism, but rather to lovingly support you in providing the best choice of Godparents for your child's faith.



## VII. Christian Witness

### WHAT ABOUT A NON-CATHOLIC RELATIVE OR FRIEND?

In situations in which it seems appropriate, parents may select one person to act as a Christian Witness to their child's Baptism. In all cases, however, there must be at least one practicing Catholic Godparent. The Christian Witness is not precisely a Godparent, since a Godparent has the mission to hand on and teach the *Catholic faith* by word and example.

In permitting a **baptized non-Catholic** to act as a Christian Witness, the Church gives due recognition to that person's love for the child and the common Baptism that is shared by all followers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, please note that the Christian witness is not equal to a Godparent. For example, in the ceremony the Godparent(s) will be

promising to support the parents in raising their child in the Catholic faith. The Godparent(s) will also make a brief profession of their own Catholic faith in the ceremony. These are specifically Catholic gestures which a non-Catholic could not sincerely make.

Consider also that a Godparent will continue to play a role in the other sacraments in the child's life. For example, when the child receives his/her First Holy Communion, only a Catholic Godparent will be able to participate fully with the child in that event. In the Sacrament of Confirmation it is ideal to choose a Godparent from Baptism as one's sponsor, a role which only a practicing Catholic will be eligible to undertake.

*For all these reasons please consider carefully the long-term benefits of your choice and give first preference to practicing Catholic relatives and friends to serve you and your child as Catholic Godparents.*

## **Frequently Asked Questions about Baptism**

*What are the requirements to be a Godparent?*

Among others, the following are basic:

They must be at least 16 years of age, unless the proper pastor has given permission for a person of younger age.

They must be a Catholic who has received the sacraments of Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation.

They must be a practicing Catholic who attends Mass regularly, goes to Confession if in serious sin at least once a year, and is a registered parishioner in his/her parish.

If married, a person who was married in the Catholic Church or with the Church's permission.

*Must we have both a Godfather and a Godmother?*

No. While it is customary to have both a Godfather and a Godmother the sacrament of Baptism requires a minimum of one Godparent. **(Note: It is not possible to have two males or two females as Godparents.)**

*Can I just have a Christian witness instead of a Godparent?*

No. Remember that a baptized non-Catholic is not precisely a Godparent. Thus a Christian Witness may be chosen only if a Catholic Godparent has already been chosen for your child. A Christian Witness is chosen in addition to a Catholic Godparent not in place of a Catholic Godparent.

### **VIII. Attending Class and Scheduling the Baptism**

If you are newly registered in the parish, we want you to feel at home in the parish. **Please come to Mass every Sunday and use the parish envelopes so that we know you're here!** *And of course introduce yourselves to the priest – we want to meet you personally!*

The Baptism class can be taken at anytime in advance of the actual date of the Baptism. Parents must attend this class. Please contact the Parish Office to register for a Baptism Class (440-934-4227).

PLEASE NOTE: The date of the Baptism will not be scheduled until a priest has reviewed and signed the Baptism Information Sheet. The parish secretary will contact you once this has been done and will confirm which of your preferred dates is available.

Baptisms can be scheduled after the eleven o'clock Mass.

## **IX. The Symbols of Baptism**

### ***Water***

Water is an essential aspect of any baptism. The water of baptism can either be poured over the child's head or, in some places, the child can be totally immersed in the water. The water is blessed by the priest or deacon during the baptismal rite at all times except during the Easter season when the water blessed at the Easter Vigil should be used. The water itself is a sign of new life as it calls us to die to our sinfulness, only to rise to the fullness of life offered by Christ. Its gentle waves wash away the stains of original sin.

### ***Light***

At all baptisms the parents or Godparents will be entrusted with the "Light of Christ" represented in a lit baptismal candle. This light is entrusted to the child's parents and Godparents to be kept burning brightly, a representation of the child's faith being protected from the darkness of sin. By accepting the baptismal candle the parents and Godparents of the child are promising to offer an example of faithfulness to the child.

### ***Anointing with Oil***

Typically the baptism of a child will include two anointings with oil blessed by the Diocesan Bishop during the previous Holy Week. The first oil known as the Oil of Catechumens is applied to the child's chest invoking Christ's power and protection in the life of the child.

The second anointing is with Holy Chrism, which is oil that has had an aromatic perfume called balm added to it. The chrism is placed on the crown of the child's head in an ancient sign of kingship. It represents the royal priesthood of the baptized and the child's enrollment into God's people.

## Your Personal Preparation for the Baptism

Has it been a long time since you went to Confession? “Welcome back” are the gentle words you will hear!



God knows that we need to hear with our own ears that our sins are forgiven. That’s why he gave us this beautiful and powerful sacrament. (*Check it out – the Gospel of John, Chapter 20, verses 19-23*) God uses the humble instrument of a priest to deliver to us the peace that only God Himself can give.

Therefore, just as Baptism cleanses a child’s soul of Original Sin, so the Sacrament of Reconciliation cleanses an adult’s soul from personal sins. How necessary and appropriate it is to make a good confession before your baby’s baptism date arrives!



We hope this booklet helps you in your preparations for your child’s baptism and we eagerly look forward to that special day. If you have any further questions please contact us at:

**Saint Teresa of Avila Roman Catholic Church**  
**1878 Abbe Road**  
**Sheffield Village, Ohio 44054**  
**440-934-4227**

## Parental Self-Assessment

Parents' & Childs' Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Address & Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

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The Church clearly states that it is the responsibility of Her Bishops, Priests and Deacons to ensure that the Sacrament of Baptism is being celebrated reverently and appropriately. This responsibility means that the clergy are called upon to inquire about the faith of the parents as a way of ensuring a child isn't being baptized without a "well founded hope" of being raised fully in the active practice of the faith. In the event that a "well founded hope" is not present, the priest is obligated to delay baptism until a more suitable time. Therefore, the following questions are designed to aid the clergy in their duty.

**NOTE: Please answer these questions and return this page to the parish office. No baptism date can be set until this page has been submitted to the parish office and reviewed by the parish priest.**

1. Do you regularly attend Sunday and Holy Day Masses at Saint Teresa of Avila Parish?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

*[Please know your parish contribution record will be used to help determine your regular Mass attendance]*

2. Are both of you, as parents, fully initiated *Catholics* having received your own Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation? [If "no" please explain]

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Do you actively live your faith by giving of your time and talent to Saint Teresa of Avila Parish, charitable organizations or institutions?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered "yes" please list some of your activities: \_\_\_\_\_

4. In your own words why do you want your child to be baptized?

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5. If married, was your current marriage witnessed by a member of the Catholic clergy (Bishop, Priest or Deacon)?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered "no" please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Where were you married? \_\_\_\_\_